

The aim of the research is:

- 1) to develop a comprehensive theoretical model for transition of spatial management of metropolitan areas in the post-socialist countries under the influence of political, social and economic processes observed after 1989;
- 2) to verify the applicability of theoretical approaches to the problem of governing metropolitan areas (metropolitan reform, public choice theory, *metropolitan governance*, *soft spatial planning*), developed mainly in the US and Western Europe, in relation to their explanatory power to the phenomena occurring in the post-socialist countries;
- 3) to determine the optimal methods for the integrated management of spatial development of metropolitan areas in the post-socialist countries, taking into account their specific features;

The main hypothesis of the research is the assumption that the territorial-administrative and spatial-functional processes which in Western countries led to the increased interest in concepts of management integration spatial development of metropolitan areas (already in the mid-20th century), as well as to attempted reforms in this field, have started in the post-socialist countries with a considerable delay and took place parallel to the overall transformation of the political, social and economic conditions in these countries. Therefore, it is necessary to supplement the existing global theories with some features that are typical for post-socialist countries, including democratization and decentralization of the territorial-administrative structures, liberalization of the planning system and the privatization of land and housing stock.

The overall outline of the work plan consists of 3 main parts: theoretical, analytical and synthetic. Within each of them the two specific research objectives can be distinguished, together forming a general scheme of the research project:

1. Review of current scientific discussion about the management of spatial development of metropolitan areas in the light of selected theoretical concepts;
2. Determining the key political, social and economic factors affecting the transformation of governance model for the spatial development of metropolitan areas in the post-socialist countries after 1989.
3. Analysis of national territorial-administrative, legislative, planning and financial circumstances of governance for spatial development of metropolitan areas in East Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria
4. The empirical analysis of selected case studies in terms of the main actors of metropolitan governance, their interrelationships and interactions, used instruments for integrated management and the effects of integration so far
5. Determining the scope of differences in development paths and the situation of post-socialist countries in relation to the existing theoretical concepts
6. Developing a typology of territorial-functional models of metropolitan integration in post-socialist countries and the principles of optimizing the structure of the integrated management for metropolitan areas in these states

A significant problem in the current state of knowledge in the field of governance of the metropolitan areas is the lack of a holistic perspective to perceive the specifics of post-socialist countries. There are still no publications that attempt to comprehensively explain the process of reshaping the spatial management system of metropolitan areas in relation to the general trends of political and socio-economic transition in post-socialist countries..

In this context, the innovative dimension of the proposed project will result from the linkage of mechanisms of the general political and socio-economic transformation with the management models of metropolitan areas based on the concepts of *metropolitan governance* and *soft spatial planning*. The main result of the research project will be enriching the global theoretical achievements in the field of governance of the metropolitan areas with the prospect of post-socialist countries, which has so far been perceived marginally. The results of the project will form the theoretical and empirical basis, which can be used in the legislative work on the territorial-administrative and spatial planning system for metropolitan areas (the 'top-down' perspective). On the other hand, optimal solutions aimed at improving the grassroots cooperation of local governments in metropolitan areas will be proposed, aimed at strengthening the spatial management integration at this level (the 'bottom-up' perspective).